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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis A. Davis

Action taken by the Committee

Cross-sectoral programmes for coordinated action by the United Nations system in the area of water resources: information management

(Agenda item 9 (a))

1. At the _____ meeting, on _____ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

The Committee wishes to stress the importance of integrated information as an indispensable basis for the sustainable development and management of land and water resources.

The Committee:

(a) Recommends that the organizations of the United Nations system provide assistance to Governments, as appropriate, towards the establishment or strengthening of their databases as tools for integrated action in the development and management of water resources, at the national and regional levels. Such databases should incorporate socio-economic, biological, physical and chemical parameters into integrated systems, notably geographical information systems (GIS), to be shared by sectoral authorities, decision makers, non-governmental

organizations, research institutions and the private sector. Priority attention needs to be given to drought-prone countries, where the lack of information has resulted in a haphazard development of water resources, and in particular of groundwater;

(b) Takes note with appreciation of the coordinated efforts of the organizations of the United Nations system in the establishment of a system-wide integrated monitoring and assessment network, with a view to evaluating periodically the state of the freshwater resources on a global basis, and recommends that they give urgent consideration to this task, in full cooperation with the regional commissions.

Action taken by the Committee

Cross-sectoral programmes for coordinated action by the United Nations system in the area of water resources: capacity-building for water resources management

(Agenda item 9 (b))

2. At the _____ meeting, on _____ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

While recognizing that capacity-building is one of the essential preconditions for the implementation of Agenda 21 and the achievement of sustainable development, the Committee wishes to emphasize that human resources development should be primarily considered as a tool for the institutional strengthening of governmental, private and non-governmental organizations.

National capacity-building in the area of water resources management must include the capacity to undertake regional assessments of the relationship between water and soils as a resource, based on strategic scientific surveys involving geological and hydrological approaches, together with relevant socio-economic and ecological studies, as well as the capacity to integrate this information with other information sets in a holistic management strategy. In this regard, airborne radiometric data sets can be particularly valuable in providing the basis for a strategic understanding and management of soils.

In dealing with issues of capacity-building, the Committee wishes to stress the need to develop policies aimed at the retention of trained personnel needed to implement water resources development and management programmes continuously and successfully.

The Committee takes into account that the great diversity of conditions faced by water-short regions of the world calls for the execution of selected case-studies to identify their main underlying causes and characteristics.

The Committee stresses the importance of strengthening South-South cooperation and coordination in capacity-building, together with increasing North-South cooperation, especially in the areas of financial support and technology transfer, as the achievement of sustainable development in the field of water resources will require a fair and equitable sharing of knowledge between developed and developing countries.

In view of the above and other considerations, the Committee:

(a) Recommends that organizations of the United Nations system promote capacity-building as a component of all technical cooperation programmes, unless a specific need for a separate programme is identified;

(b) Welcomes the ongoing assistance of various United Nations organizations with regard to capacity-building for water resources development and management;

(c) Recommends that such assistance be increased in the future, taking into account local conditions, specific needs and constraints faced by individual countries. Besides training and the transfer of technology, this assistance should also include the adequate provision of equipment and machinery;

(d) Recommends that on-the-job training programmes take into consideration the wider requirements of capacity-building for water resources planning and management;

(e) Recommends that the above-mentioned case-studies be based on a holistic approach and thus consider both bio-geo-chemical and socio-technological cycles of water, with a view to supporting human resources development in developing countries, and that priority be assigned to drought-stricken regions of developing countries.